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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
13 May 1953

PROBABLE SATELLITE REACTION TO US OFFER OF FOOD ASSISTANCE

NSC review completed - may be declassified in full

An offer by the United States Government to provide gifts of food to be distributed by an agency such as the International Red Cross in Hungary, Poland, and Rumania would hardly result in an unqualified and decisive propaganda victory for this country. It is believed that considerable unfavorable reaction would be engendered among the non-Communist majority of the population in these Satellites. Moreover, following their certain rejection of the offer, the Communist regimes would have been provided with an excellent propaganda theme to be exploited to the disadvantage of the US.

Except possibly in Hungary, food supplies are believed to be adequate at the present time to supply basic needs for a low level of subsistence and to prevent any starvation. Depending on the weather, the situation will probably begin to improve about mid-June and continue to do so through the summer.

American officials in Warsaw and Bucharest, in contrast to those in Budapest, do not believe that the offer would force the leaders of these Satellites to take steps to improve the food supply currently available to the people. The much more likely reaction would be outright rejection of the offer and a propaganda attack asserting that the US is attempting economic imperialism in order to dispose of its food surpluses. The Satellites would claim that living standards are rising, that current food supplies are adequate, and that, if help is needed, the USSR will supply it.

State Dept. review
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Supervision of the distribution of the food by an impartial agency such as the International Red Cross would not be permitted by the Satellites. All agencies such as the IRC were forced to suspend operations in the Satellites some years ago and there is no reason to believe that they would now be permitted to operate in these countries for the purpose of distributing gift food. Equally important, for reasons of internal security the Satellites would not desire representatives of an international agency traveling about their countries while supervising the distribution of the food gifts. Finally, Satellite officials undoubtedly would not agree either with representatives of the United States or of the international agency as to what individuals should receive the food.

With few exceptions the non-Communist majority of the Satellite populations can be expected to react unfavorably to such an offer by the United States. They would consider such assistance from the US, which is their bastion of hope for liberation from Communist rule, to be in effect support for the present unpopular regimes.

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